

February 14, 2003

David Martinez
TWCC Medical Dispute Resolution
4000 IH 35 South, MS 48
Austin, TX 78704

MDR Tracking #: M2-03-0481-01-SS
IRO #: 5251

___ has been certified by the Texas Department of Insurance as an Independent Review Organization. The Texas Worker's Compensation Commission has assigned this case to ___ for independent review in accordance with TWCC Rule 133.308 which allows for medical dispute resolution by an IRO.

___ has performed an independent review of the proposed care to determine if the adverse determination was appropriate. In performing this review, all relevant medical records and documentation utilized to make the adverse determination, along with any documentation and written information submitted, was reviewed.

The independent review was performed by a matched peer with the treating doctor. This case was reviewed by a licensed DO with a specialty and board certification in Neurological Surgery. The ___ health care professional has signed a certification statement stating that no known conflicts of interest exist between the reviewer and any of the treating doctors or providers or any of the doctors or providers who reviewed the case for a determination prior to the referral to ___ for independent review. In addition, the reviewer has certified that the review was performed without bias for or against any party to the dispute.

CLINICAL HISTORY

___ had a prior low back injury resulting in subsequent surgical intervention and now returns because of back and leg pain over the year 2002. A subsequent MRI showed no evidence to suggest epidural fibrosis. It did, however, show marked facet joint changes at L4/5 and L3/4. There was no evidence of significant disk herniation. This patient has had some steroid injections in the past and obtained some relief on an intermittent basis, and has also had relief with oral steroids for a short period of time.

REQUESTED SERVICE

Lumbar fusion, epidural steroid injection and facet injection at L4/5 are requested.

DECISION

The reviewer both agrees and disagrees with the prior adverse determination.

The reviewer finds the epidural steroid injection and facet injection at L4/5 to be medically necessary, but not the lumbar fusion.

BASIS FOR THE DECISION

Certainly there is sufficient literature to suggest that epidural steroid injections can be helpful both for discogenic and radicular components. The literature certainly has shown that those can be useful. It has also been shown that they may not do anything whatsoever either, but this is a chronic condition at this time. This patient's only options are to see if the steroids and/or facet blocks are effective treatment. The reviewer, however, does not find that lumbar fusion is justified at this time.

___ has performed an independent review solely to determine the medical necessity of the health services that are the subject of the review. ___ has made no determinations regarding benefits available under the injured employee's policy.

As an officer of ___, I certify that there is no known conflict between the reviewer, ___ and/or any officer/employee of the IRO with any person or entity that is a party to the dispute.

___ is forwarding by mail and, in the case of time sensitive matters by facsimile, a copy of this finding to the treating doctor, payor and/or URA, patient and the TWCC.

Sincerely,

YOUR RIGHT TO REQUEST A HEARING

Either party to this medical dispute may disagree with all or part of the decision and has a right to request a hearing.

In the case of prospective ***spinal surgery*** decision, a request for a hearing must be made in writing and it must be received by the TWCC Chief Clerk of Proceedings within 10 days of your receipt of this decision. (20 Tex. Admin. Code 142.5(c)).

In the case of other ***prospective (preauthorization) medical necessity*** disputes a request for a hearing must be in writing, and it must be received by the TWCC Chief Clerk of Proceedings within **20** (twenty) days of your receipt of this decision (28 Tex. Admin. Code 148.3).

This decision is deemed received by you 5 (five) days after it was mailed (28 Tex. Admin. Code 102.4(h) or 102.5(d)). A request for a hearing should be sent to: Chief

Clerk of Proceedings, Texas Worker's Compensation Commission, P.O. Box 40669, Austin, TX 78704-0012. A copy of this decision should be attached to the request.

The party appealing this decision shall deliver a copy of its written request for a hearing to all other parties involved in the dispute, per TWCC rule 133.308(t)(2).

I hereby certify, in accordance with TWCC Rule 102.4 (h), that a copy of this Independent Review Organization decision was sent to the carrier, requestor, claimant (and/or the claimant's representative) and the TWCC via facsimile, U.S. Postal Service or both on this 14th day of February, 2003.